

I THOUGHT IT WAS ME

A ONE-ACT PLAY

BY
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This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to real people, families, or places is purely coincidental.

Content Note

This play explores family pressure, sexuality, marriage, emotional harm, and the consequences of silence.

Characters

DEV (late 60s): Arjun's father. Proud and devoted to his family.

MEERA (mid 60s): Arjun's mother. Warm, perceptive and emotionally intuitive.

ARJUN (early 30s): Dev and Meera's son. Intelligent, thoughtful, and devoted to his family.

PRIYA (early 30s): Arjun's wife. Kind, educated, and hopeful.

SAMEER (early 30s): Arjun's closest friend. Practical, compassionate, and honest.

MAYA (early 30s): Priya's closest friend. Supportive, perceptive, and fiercely loyal.

SETTING

All scenes take place in this single setting.

A modest family lounge in a British South Asian home. A sofa, two armchairs, and a coffee table occupy the centre of the room. Family photographs line the walls. **DEV**'s armchair is positioned slightly apart from the others, to one side of the room.

Time: The present. The action spans several years.

SCENE ONE

*(The family lounge. **DEV** sits in his armchair reading a newspaper. **MEERA** enters carrying a tray with tea. **ARJUN** enters shortly afterwards.)*

MEERA: There you are.

ARJUN: Sorry. Work ran late.

MEERA: You always say that.

DEV: Because it's always true.
*(**MEERA** gives **DEV** a look. He smiles.)*

MEERA: Sit down. Your tea will get cold.
*(**ARJUN** sits on the sofa.)*

DEV: I spoke to Sharma yesterday.

ARJUN: Did you?

DEV: He says they're a very respectable family.

ARJUN: I'm sure he does.

MEERA: **DEV.**

DEV: What? They are.

(Pause.)

DEV: The girl's a teacher.

MEERA: Secondary school.

DEV: English, I think.

MEERA: No. History.

DEV: History then.

(MEERA shakes her head.)

MEERA: Her name is **PRIYA**.

DEV: Lovely girl.

ARJUN: You've met her?

DEV: No.

ARJUN: Then how do you know?

DEV: Because everyone says so.

ARJUN: Right.

(Silence.)

MEERA: You don't have to decide anything today.

DEV: Of course he doesn't.

MEERA: **DEV.**

DEV: I'm agreeing with you.
(MEERA gives him another look.)

DEV: All I'm saying is that opportunities don't wait forever.

ARJUN: I'm thirty-two, Dad. Not eighty-two.

DEV: Exactly.

ARJUN: That's your argument?

DEV: It's a very good argument.
(A small smile from MEERA. ARJUN cannot help smiling too.)

DEV: You laugh now.

ARJUN: I'm glad one of us is.

DEV: Listen.
(DEV leans forward.)

DEV: One day you'll come home from work and there'll be noise.

ARJUN: Noise?

DEV: Children.

MEERA: DEV.

DEV: What?

MEERA: You're doing it again.

DEV: I'm painting a picture.

ARJUN: It's very detailed.

DEV: There'll be toys everywhere.

MEERA: Ignore him.

DEV: You'll complain about the mess.

ARJUN: I probably will.

DEV: And then one day you'll realise you wouldn't have it any other way.
(*A pause. **DEV**'s tone softens.*)

DEV: I just want you to be happy.
(***ARJUN** looks away.*)

MEERA: **DEV...**

DEV: What's wrong with wanting that?
(*Silence.*)

ARJUN: Nothing.

DEV: Good.
(***DEV** settles back into his chair.*)

DEV: So.

ARJUN: So?

DEV: When are you meeting her?
(*A pause.*)

MEERA: Only if you want to.

DEV: Obviously.

MEERA: **DEV.**

DEV: What?

MEERA: Stop helping.
*(**ARJUN** laughs despite himself.)*

ARJUN: All right.

DEV: All right what?

ARJUN: I'll meet her.
*(**DEV** tries to hide his satisfaction and fails completely.)*

DEV: Good.

MEERA: Just meet her.

DEV: That's all we're asking.
*(**ARJUN** nods. He glances briefly at his father, whose face is lit with excitement.)*
*(The smile fades from **ARJUN**'s face.)*

Blackout.

SCENE TWO

(The family lounge. Evening. ARJUN sits on the sofa. He is distracted, staring into space. A knock at the door.)

ARJUN: It's open.

(SAMEER enters carrying two takeaway coffees.)

SAMEER: You sounded serious on the phone.

(He offers ARJUN a coffee.)

ARJUN: Thanks.

(SAMEER sits. He studies his friend.)

SAMEER: What's happened?

ARJUN: My parents have found someone.

SAMEER: Someone?

ARJUN: A woman.

SAMEER: Ah.

(A pause.)

SAMEER: And?

ARJUN: And they're excited.

SAMEER: Your dad especially?

ARJUN: Especially.

(Silence.)

SAMEER: What's her name?

ARJUN: **PRIYA.**

SAMEER: Have you met her?

ARJUN: Not yet.

SAMEER: And your answer is?

ARJUN: I haven't given one.

SAMEER: But you're thinking about it.

ARJUN: I have to think about it.

SAMEER: No. You don't.

(A pause.)

ARJUN: You make everything sound simple.

SAMEER: No, I don't. I just say the thing you're trying not to say.

(Silence.)

ARJUN: My dad's happy.

SAMEER: That's not a reason to get married.

ARJUN: You should have seen him.

SAMEER: **ARJUN...**

ARJUN: He was talking about grandchildren.

SAMEER: Of course he was.

ARJUN: He already has names picked out.

(SAMEER shakes his head.)

SAMEER: This is ridiculous.

ARJUN: I know.

SAMEER: Do you?

(A pause.)

ARJUN: You think I don't know what's at stake?

SAMEER: Then tell me.

ARJUN: My family.

SAMEER: And?

ARJUN: My parents.

SAMEER: And?

ARJUN: Everything.

(Silence.)

SAMEER: Have you ever thought that maybe you're not responsible for everyone else's happiness?

ARJUN: In this family?

(A brief laugh from both men.)

SAMEER: Fair point.

(The laughter fades.)

SAMEER: Have you told them?

ARJUN: No.

SAMEER: Will you?

ARJUN: I don't know.

SAMEER: You do know.

ARJUN: Fine. No.
(A pause.)

SAMEER: How long are you planning to keep pretending?

ARJUN: I'm not pretending.

SAMEER: **ARJUN...**

ARJUN: I'm trying.

SAMEER: Trying what?

ARJUN: To figure things out.

SAMEER: You've been figuring things out for ten years.
(Silence.)

ARJUN: Maybe I've never given myself a chance.

SAMEER: A chance?

ARJUN: Maybe this is all in my head.
(SAMEER stares at him.)

SAMEER: You don't believe that.

ARJUN: Maybe I haven't met the right person.

SAMEER: You don't believe that either.

ARJUN: How do you know?

SAMEER: Because we've had this conversation a hundred times.
(A long pause.)

ARJUN: People get married every day.

SAMEER: People also spend their lives miserable every day.

ARJUN: That's not what I mean.

SAMEER: Then what do you mean?

ARJUN: Maybe marriage changes things.

SAMEER: For who?
(ARJUN doesn't answer.)

SAMEER: **ARJUN**... are you hoping marriage will make you straight?
(Silence.)

ARJUN: When you say it like that, it sounds stupid.

SAMEER: That's because it is.

ARJUN: My parents don't think it's stupid.

SAMEER: Your parents don't know.

(Silence.)

ARJUN: My dad grew up believing certain things.

SAMEER: So did mine.

ARJUN: You don't understand.

SAMEER: Then help me understand.

(ARJUN struggles.)

ARJUN: If I tell him...

(A pause.)

ARJUN: He'll think he failed.

SAMEER: That's not your burden to carry.

ARJUN: Maybe not.

SAMEER: Definitely not.

(Silence.)

ARJUN: I just want him to be happy.

SAMEER: And what about **PRIYA**?

(The question lands heavily.)

ARJUN: I haven't even met her yet.

SAMEER: Exactly.

(A long silence.)

SAMEER: Don't do this.

ARJUN: I haven't agreed.

SAMEER: You're thinking about agreeing.

ARJUN: Maybe.

SAMEER: Why?

*(ARJUN looks around the room. At the family photographs. At **DEV's** empty armchair.)*

ARJUN: Because I want to believe they're right.

(A pause.)

SAMEER: About what?

ARJUN: That once I'm married, everything will fall into place.

(Silence.)

SAMEER: And if it doesn't?

*(**ARJUN** has no answer.)*

(The two friends sit quietly. Neither drinks their coffee.)

Blackout.

SCENE THREE

*(The family lounge. Six months later. The room is tidier than usual. A wedding photograph of **ARJUN** and **PRIYA** has been added to the wall. **PRIYA** and **MAYA** sit on the sofa with mugs of tea.)*

MAYA: So?

PRIYA: So what?

MAYA: You've been married for six months.

PRIYA: And?

MAYA: And stop pretending you don't know what I'm asking.

(PRIYA smiles.)

PRIYA: Nothing to report.

MAYA: Nothing?

PRIYA: Nothing.

MAYA: You're a terrible liar.

(Pause.)

PRIYA: It's good.

MAYA: Just good?

PRIYA: What do you want me to say?

MAYA: I don't know. Happy. Wonderful. Amazing.

PRIYA: You've been watching too many movies...

(They laugh.)

MAYA: Seriously though.

PRIYA: Seriously though what?

MAYA: Is everything okay?

(PRIYA hesitates.)

PRIYA: Of course.

MAYA: That wasn't a convincing "of course."

PRIYA: It's just...

MAYA: What?

PRIYA: I thought marriage would feel different.

MAYA: Different how?
(*Pause.*)

PRIYA: I don't know.

MAYA: You do know.
(*Silence.*)

PRIYA: Sometimes it feels as though we're still getting to know each other.

MAYA: You've only been married six months.

PRIYA: I know.

MAYA: That doesn't sound unusual.

PRIYA: Maybe.
(*MAYA studies her.*)

MAYA: But?

PRIYA: But sometimes I feel like he's somewhere else.

MAYA: Work?

PRIYA: No.

MAYA: Family?

PRIYA: No.

MAYA: Then where?

PRIYA: I don't know.

(Silence.)

MAYA: Have you talked to him?

PRIYA: Not really.

MAYA: Why not?

PRIYA: Because it sounds ridiculous when I say it out loud.

MAYA: Try me.

(Pause.)

PRIYA: Sometimes I wonder if he even wanted to get married.

MAYA: **PRIYA...**

PRIYA: I know.

MAYA: That's a big conclusion.

PRIYA: I know.

MAYA: Has he said anything?

PRIYA: No.

MAYA: Has he done anything?

PRIYA: No.

MAYA: Then where is this coming from?

(PRIYA struggles to answer.)

PRIYA: Just a feeling.

(Silence.)

MAYA: Maybe he's still adjusting.

PRIYA: Maybe.

MAYA: Maybe he's nervous.

PRIYA: Maybe.

MAYA: Maybe you're overthinking.

PRIYA: Maybe.

(MAYA reaches across and squeezes PRIYA's hand.)

MAYA: You're happy though?

(A pause.)

PRIYA: Most of the time.

(The front door opens. ARJUN enters carrying a bag of groceries.)

ARJUN: Oh. I didn't know we had company.

PRIYA: MAYA's just leaving.

MAYA: Apparently I've overstayed my welcome.

ARJUN: That's not what I said.
(MAYA stands.)

MAYA: Good. Because I was about to help myself to dinner.
(They laugh.)

PRIYA: I'll walk you out.
(PRIYA and MAYA move towards the door. MAYA quietly speaks to PRIYA.)

MAYA: Stop worrying.

PRIYA: I'm trying.

MAYA: Talk to him.

PRIYA: Maybe.

MAYA: Don't "maybe."
(PRIYA smiles.)

PRIYA: Bye.
(MAYA exits. PRIYA closes the door and turns. ARJUN is unpacking the shopping.)

ARJUN: Everything okay?

PRIYA: Yes.

ARJUN: What were you two talking about?

PRIYA: Nothing.

ARJUN: Nothing?

PRIYA: Nothing important.

(A pause.)

ARJUN: Good.

(Silence. They stand together in the room, neither quite knowing what to say next.)

(PRIYA glances at their wedding photograph.)

Blackout.

SCENE FOUR

(The family lounge. Two years later. The wedding photograph remains on the wall. DEV sits in his armchair. MEERA knits. PRIYA brings in tea.)

PRIYA: Here we are.

DEV: Now this is service.

MEERA: You've had three cups already.

DEV: And?

MEERA: The doctor told you to cut down.

DEV: The doctor says a lot of things.

(PRIYA smiles and hands him a cup.)

DEV: Thank you.

PRIYA: You're welcome.

(ARJUN enters.)

DEV: There he is.

ARJUN: Sorry. Traffic.

DEV: One day you'll discover this miraculous invention called leaving on time.

ARJUN: And miss these lectures?

(DEV laughs.)

DEV: Smart mouth.

(A comfortable silence.)

DEV: So.

ARJUN: So?

DEV: Any news?

ARJUN: About?

DEV: Don't play games.

MEERA: DEV.

DEV: What?

MEERA: Leave them alone.

DEV: I'm only asking.

(PRIYA lowers her eyes.)

ARJUN: There's no news.

DEV: Yet.

ARJUN: Yet.

DEV: There's still time.

MEERA: Enough.
(Silence.)

DEV: I just want grandchildren before I'm too old to enjoy them.

MEERA: You're already old.

DEV: Thank you for your support.
*(They laugh. **PRIYA** forces a smile.)*

(Lights fade slightly to indicate the passage of time.)

*(Later. **DEV** and **MEERA** have gone out. **PRIYA** sits alone. A knock at the door.)*

PRIYA: Come in.
*(**MAYA** enters.)*

MAYA: I was nearby.

PRIYA: Liar.

MAYA: All right. I came to check on you.

PRIYA: Why?

MAYA: Because you haven't answered my messages for three days.
(Pause.)

MAYA: What's wrong?

PRIYA: Nothing.

MAYA: Try again.
(*Silence.*)

PRIYA: Do you ever look in the mirror and wonder what's wrong with you?

MAYA: That's not a normal opening line.

PRIYA: Answer the question.

MAYA: No.
(*Pause.*)

PRIYA: I do.

MAYA: **PRIYA...**

PRIYA: Maybe I'm not attractive enough.

MAYA: Stop.

PRIYA: Maybe I've put on weight.

MAYA: Stop.

PRIYA: Maybe I'm boring.

MAYA: Stop.
(*Silence.*)

MAYA: Where is this coming from?

PRIYA: I don't know.

MAYA: Yes, you do.
(*A pause.*)

PRIYA: I don't think my husband wants me.
(*Silence.*)

MAYA: Has he said that?

PRIYA: No.

MAYA: Has he treated you badly?

PRIYA: No.

MAYA: Then?

PRIYA: I can feel it.
(*MAYA sits beside her.*)

MAYA: Talk to him.

PRIYA: I have.

MAYA: And?

PRIYA: He says he's tired. Stressed. Busy.

MAYA: Maybe he is.

PRIYA: For two years?
(*Silence.*)

MAYA: I don't know.

PRIYA: Neither do I.
*(The front door opens. **MAYA** quickly wipes away a tear from **PRIYA**'s cheek.)*
*(**ARJUN** enters.)*

ARJUN: Oh. Hi, **MAYA**.

MAYA: Hi.
(An awkward pause.)

ARJUN: Everything okay?

PRIYA: Yes.

ARJUN: You sure?

PRIYA: Of course.
*(**ARJUN** nods.)*

ARJUN: Good.

(He disappears into another room.)
(Silence.)

MAYA: You see?

PRIYA: What?

MAYA: He didn't even notice.
*(**PRIYA** looks towards the doorway through which **ARJUN** exited.)*

(Lights fade slightly to indicate the passage of time.)

*(Later that evening. **SAMEER** sits with **ARJUN**.)*

SAMEER: How long?

ARJUN: How long what?

SAMEER: How long are you going to keep this up?
(*Silence.*)

ARJUN: I don't know.

SAMEER: You said that two years ago.

ARJUN: I know.

SAMEER: And now?
(*A pause.*)

ARJUN: I keep thinking things will change.

SAMEER: Have they?
(*Silence.*)

ARJUN: No.

SAMEER: Then stop lying to yourself.

(***ARJUN** looks at the wedding photograph.*)

ARJUN: I never meant to hurt her.

SAMEER: That doesn't mean you haven't.
(*A long silence.*)

Blackout.

SCENE FIVE

(The family lounge. One year later. DEV's armchair is empty. A framed photograph of DEV sits on a small table beside it. The room feels quieter. MEERA sits alone, looking through a photo album. ARJUN enters.)

ARJUN: Mum.

MEERA: You're home early.

ARJUN: For once.

(MEERA smiles faintly.)

MEERA: Your father would have had something to say about that.

ARJUN: Probably.

(Silence.)

MEERA: The house feels different.

ARJUN: It's been a year.

MEERA: I know.

(She closes the album.)

MEERA: Some days I still expect to hear him complaining about the television.

ARJUN: Or the heating.

MEERA: Or the neighbours.

ARJUN: Or politics.

MEERA: Especially politics.

(They share a brief laugh.)

(The laughter fades.)

MEERA: He loved you very much.

ARJUN: I know.

MEERA: He worried about you.

ARJUN: I know.

MEERA: He only ever wanted you to be happy.

*(**ARJUN** looks away.)*

ARJUN: Did he?

MEERA: What does that mean?

ARJUN: Nothing.

(Silence.)

MEERA: **ARJUN.**

ARJUN: Mum, please.

*(**MEERA** studies him.)*

MEERA: All right.

(She stands.)

MEERA: I'll put the kettle on.

*(**MEERA** exits.)*

*(**ARJUN** remains. He looks at **DEV**'s photograph.)*

ARJUN: I tried.

(Silence.)

ARJUN: I really tried.

(He laughs bitterly to himself.)

ARJUN: You'd have liked that, wouldn't you?

(A pause.)

ARJUN: The house. The wedding. The photographs.

(Silence.)

ARJUN: I kept thinking if I tried hard enough, one day I'd wake up and everything would feel right.

(A pause.)

ARJUN: Like everyone said it would.

(Silence.)

ARJUN: But it never did.

(He looks at DEV'S photograph.)

ARJUN: And now you're gone.

(A long pause.)

ARJUN: And I still don't know who I was doing it for.

(Lights shift slightly to indicate the passage of time.)

*(Later. **SAMEER** sits opposite **ARJUN**.)*

SAMEER: How's your mum?

ARJUN: Some days are better than others.

SAMEER: And you?

ARJUN: Same answer.

(Pause.)

SAMEER: It's been a year.

ARJUN: I know.

SAMEER: Then why are you still waiting?

(Silence.)

ARJUN: Because if I tell her...

SAMEER: What?

ARJUN: Then all of this becomes real.

(Silence.)

SAMEER: It's already real.

ARJUN: No.

(A pause.)

ARJUN: Right now I can still pretend I haven't ruined her life.

(Silence.)

SAMEER: You think that's what this is?

ARJUN: What else would you call it?

(A pause.)

SAMEER: I'd call it a man who spent his whole life trying to become somebody else.

(Silence.)

ARJUN: And look how that turned out.

(A pause.)

ARJUN: Do you know how many times I thought it was finally working?

SAMEER: What?

ARJUN: The marriage.

(Silence.)

ARJUN: I'd have one good day. One normal day.

(A pause.)

ARJUN: And I'd think, "There. This is it. This is the day everything changes."

(Silence.)

ARJUN: Then the next morning I'd wake up and still be me.

(A long pause.)

SAMEER: ARJUN...

ARJUN: I was so tired of being me.

(Silence.)

SAMEER: You never said that before.

ARJUN: Because it sounds pathetic.

SAMEER: No.

(A pause.)

SAMEER: It sounds lonely.

(Silence.)

ARJUN: I've spent years disappointing everyone.

SAMEER: No.

ARJUN: Look around.

SAMEER: You've spent years disappointing yourself.

(A long silence.)

ARJUN: What if she hates me?

SAMEER: She might.

(Silence.)

ARJUN: What if she never forgives me?

SAMEER: She might not.

(A pause.)

SAMEER: But at least she'll finally be angry for the right reason.

(Silence.)

(Lights fade slightly to indicate the passage of time.)

*(Later that evening. **PRIYA** enters. **SAMEER** has gone. **ARJUN** is alone.)*

PRIYA: Who was here?

ARJUN: **SAMEER**

PRIYA: How is he?

ARJUN: Good.

(Silence.)

PRIYA: **MAYA** asked about you.

ARJUN: Did she?

PRIYA: She thinks we should all have dinner sometime.

ARJUN: Maybe.

(Another silence.)

PRIYA: You say that a lot.

ARJUN: What?

PRIYA: "Maybe."

(Pause.)

PRIYA: Maybe later. Maybe next week. Maybe when things settle down.

(Silence.)

PRIYA: When do they settle down, **ARJUN**?

(ARJUN looks at her but says nothing.)

PRIYA: Five years.

(A pause.)

PRIYA: We've been married five years.

(Silence.)

PRIYA: Do you know what frightens me?

ARJUN: What?

PRIYA: I'm starting to think this is as good as it gets.

(A long silence.)

(PRIYA exits quietly.)

(ARJUN remains standing in the room.)

(His eyes drift to the wedding photograph. Then to DEV's empty chair.)

(For the first time, he understands that neither can save him.)

Blackout.

SCENE SIX

(The family lounge. A few days later. Evening. The room is quiet. PRIYA sits on the sofa reading. ARJUN enters. He appears unsettled.)

ARJUN: PRIYA.

PRIYA: Hmm?

ARJUN: Can we talk?

(PRIYA lowers her book.)

PRIYA: That sounds serious.

(ARJUN doesn't smile.)

PRIYA: What's wrong?

(A pause.)

ARJUN: I need to tell you something.

(PRIYA sits up.)

PRIYA: You're frightening me.

(Silence.)

ARJUN: I'm sorry.

PRIYA: For what?

(A long pause.)

ARJUN: For all of it.

(PRIYA stares at him.)

PRIYA: **ARJUN.**

(Silence.)

ARJUN: I should have told you years ago.

PRIYA: Told me what?

(A pause.)

ARJUN: There's a reason things have been the way they've been.

(PRIYA waits.)

ARJUN: It isn't because of you.

(Silence.)

PRIYA: What isn't?

ARJUN: Any of it.

(A pause.)

PRIYA: Then what is it?

(ARJUN struggles.)

ARJUN: I thought I could make it work.

PRIYA: Make what work?

(Silence.)

ARJUN: This.
(PRIYA looks around the room.)

PRIYA: Our marriage?
(ARJUN nods.)

PRIYA: I don't understand.
(A long pause.)

ARJUN: I'm gay.
(Silence.)
(PRIYA does not react immediately.)

PRIYA: What?

ARJUN: I'm gay.
(Silence.)

PRIYA: No.
(ARJUN lowers his eyes.)

PRIYA: No.
(A pause.)

PRIYA: How long?
(Silence.)

PRIYA: **ARJUN.**
(A pause.)

PRIYA: How long?

ARJUN: Years.
(PRIYA stares at him.)

PRIYA: Years before we met?
(ARJUN says nothing.)

PRIYA: Years before we got married?
(Silence.)

PRIYA: Did you know?
(A long pause.)

ARJUN: I thought marriage might change things.

PRIYA: That's not what I asked.

(Silence.)

PRIYA: Did you know?

(ARJUN nods.)

(PRIYA looks away.)

(A very long silence.)

PRIYA: All these years...

(She struggles to continue.)

PRIYA: I thought it was me.

(Silence.)

PRIYA: I thought I wasn't attractive enough.

(A pause.)

PRIYA: I thought I was doing something wrong.

(Another pause.)

PRIYA: I kept trying to fix things.

(ARJUN closes his eyes.)

ARJUN: I'm sorry.

PRIYA: Stop saying that.

(Silence.)

PRIYA: Did anyone else know?

(A pause.)

ARJUN: **SAMEER**

(PRIYA nods slowly.)

PRIYA: Of course.

(Silence.)

PRIYA: And your parents?

ARJUN: No.

PRIYA: You never told them?

ARJUN: No.

(Silence.)

PRIYA: So I was easier.

(ARJUN looks up.)

PRIYA: You couldn't tell them.

(A pause.)

PRIYA: So you married me.

(Silence.)

ARJUN: I never wanted to hurt you.

PRIYA: But you did.

(A long silence.)

(PRIYA stands.)

ARJUN: **PRIYA...**

PRIYA: No.

(A pause.)

PRIYA: I don't want an explanation.

(Silence.)

PRIYA: I just want one thing.

ARJUN: What?

(PRIYA looks at him.)

PRIYA: The truth.

(A long pause.)

PRIYA: For once.

(She exits.)

(ARJUN remains standing alone in the room.)

(His eyes move to the wedding photograph.)

*(Then to **DEV's** empty chair.)*

(Silence.)

Blackout.

SCENE SEVEN

*(The family lounge. Three weeks later. Several boxes are stacked near the door. The wedding photograph has been taken down. Its outline remains visible on the wall. **PRIYA** sits on the sofa. **MAYA** enters carrying another box.)*

MAYA: Where do you want this?

PRIYA: Anywhere.

*(**MAYA** sets the box down.)*

MAYA: You're keeping the books?

PRIYA: Most of them.

MAYA: Good.

(Silence.)

MAYA: How are you?

PRIYA: I wish people would stop asking me that.

MAYA: That's not an answer.

PRIYA: Exactly.

*(**MAYA** sits beside her.)*

MAYA: You don't have to be strong.

PRIYA: I'm not trying to be strong.

(A pause.)

PRIYA: I'm trying to understand.

MAYA: And?

PRIYA: I can't.

(Silence.)

PRIYA: For years I thought there was something wrong with me.

MAYA: There wasn't.

PRIYA: I know that now.

(A pause.)

PRIYA: But knowing it doesn't give me those years back.

(Silence.)

MAYA: No.

PRIYA: I keep replaying everything.

MAYA: Why?

PRIYA: Because I want to find the moment when I should have known.

MAYA: You couldn't have known.

PRIYA: Couldn't I?

MAYA: No.

(Silence.)

PRIYA: Everyone kept telling me marriage takes time. Marriage is hard. Marriage needs patience.

(A pause.)

PRIYA: So I waited.

(Silence.)

PRIYA: I waited because that's what wives are supposed to do.

MAYA: **PRIYA...**

PRIYA: No.

(A pause.)

PRIYA: I did everything I was supposed to do.

(Silence.)

PRIYA: I compromised. I adjusted. I stayed quiet. I kept trying.

(A pause.)

PRIYA: And everyone called that love.

(Silence.)

MAYA: You loved him.

PRIYA: Yes.

(A long pause.)

PRIYA: But love shouldn't require you to disappear.

(Silence.)

MAYA: No.

(PRIYA looks around the room.)

PRIYA: Do you know the worst part?

MAYA: What?

PRIYA: I don't even hate him.

(Silence.)

PRIYA: I should. It would be easier.

MAYA: Then what do you feel?
(A pause.)

PRIYA: Tired.
(Silence.)

PRIYA: Tired of all the things people are expected to carry.
(MAYA says nothing.)

PRIYA: His secret. His fear. His father's expectations.
(A pause.)

PRIYA: Everyone handed me something to carry.
(Silence.)

PRIYA: No one asked if I wanted to.
(A long pause.)

MAYA: What happens now?
(PRIYA looks at the boxes.)

PRIYA: Now I learn who I am without all of it.

MAYA: That sounds frightening.

PRIYA: It is.
(A pause.)

PRIYA: But for the first time in years, it also feels honest.
(Silence.)
(MAYA reaches for PRIYA's hand.)

MAYA: You'll be okay.
(PRIYA considers this.)

PRIYA: Maybe.
(A pause.)

PRIYA: Not today.
(Silence.)

PRIYA: Maybe not for a while.
(She looks around the room one final time.)

PRIYA: But I'll get there.

(A long silence.)

(PRIYA picks up a box and walks towards the door.)

(MAYA follows.)

(The room is left empty. DEV's chair remains where it has always been.)

Blackout.

THE END